

Cross in Geneva. (See Nicolas Bouvier and Michèle Mercier, *Focus on Humanity*, 1995.) Here is housed a large collection dating from the beginning of this century onwards, providing a somewhat different focus on what the compilers of this volume classify as 'ethnographic photographs'.

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Namibia Resource Centre and Southern
Africa Library

WILHELM ÖSTBERG, *Land is Coming up: the Burunge of central Tanzania and their environments*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology 34, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995, 282.00 kroner, 258 pp., ISBN 91 7153 404 0 paperback.

This work is a detailed study of what the Burunge people think about soil erosion, how they manage their land and how they cope with life in rural Tanzania. The author discusses Burunge farming practices, Burunge attitudes to, and understanding of, soil loss and formation, the use of forests, immigration into the Burunge hills and current land pressures there. Soil erosion is evidently becoming a problem; immigration is increasing and land use is intensifying. Based on six and a half months' fieldwork completed between 1991 and 1994, the book is written in a fast, readable style and contains many fascinating details on what peasants think about their farms, current changes and the researchers who insist on studying them.

The problem is that it is hard to put what we learn into perspective. At a local level there is no attempt to relate the Burunge's detailed knowledge of soil and their environment to a wider overview of environmental change. There is little sense of how representative the bad areas are of the rest of the hills. Östberg does not address literature which reassesses the problem of soil erosion in semi-arid lands. At the national and regional levels the study is not put into its historical, geographical, economic or political context. There appears to have been no archival research; Iliffe, Koponen, Kjekhus and Shivji do not appear in the bibliography, nor does Hyden's *Beyond Ujamaa*. Immigration and take-over of land dominate rural life in Tanzania. Östberg describes this colourfully for Burunge, but provides no comparative discussion. Similarly the author describes ethnic fluidity and flexibility in relations between the Rangi and the

Burunge but does not mention comparative material on similar contemporary processes elsewhere in the region, or in its past.

Other parts of his argument are disappointing. Östberg offers a lively defence of the ethnographer's ability to write accurate accounts of other people's understanding of their realities. However, it soon turns to an assertion that he has been able to recognise the 'true situation' (as regards PRA wealth rankings) and got his interpretation 'right' (concerning Burunge interpretations of soil erosion). Few readers will be able to challenge Östberg empirically, and the epistemological debate is not advanced by his conviction. I would rather have learnt more about the nature of differences in wealth or about how they change, for example, than hear the author's faith in his findings.

Despite these flaws the book is saved by its vibrancy. It was published a year after the research finished. If it is parochial in its outlook, it is close to the field—with the dirt of the notebooks still on the page, the smell of the dust rising from his descriptions and the dapple of light and shade mirrored in the random vignettes of forest scenes scattered through the prose. It is an enjoyable and useful account of the experience of fieldwork, the troubles and difficulties of forming impressions, the pleasure of making connections, communicating, understanding and the exhilaration of discovery. I would recommend it to researchers going to East Africa, especially those going to work in semi-arid environments, and to practitioners of soil conservation and agricultural development programmes.

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ADOLPHE LINDER, *The Swiss at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–1971*. Basle: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1997, 527 pp., ISBN 3 905141 66 3.

The author is to be commended on his work, which is the result of detailed and source-based research. Besides consulting numerous archives, even tombstones and epitaphs were used. Despite the author's tireless enquiries, this book may be criticised for various reasons. First, while the period 1652–1945 is covered in 382 pages, the remaining twenty-five years fill a mere seven pages. Rather than attempting full coverage of the period under review, the author should have considered limiting his work. The second anomaly also concerns

time frames. Although the scope defines coverage until 1971, the chapter on trade relations between Switzerland and South Africa includes information on the 1990s. This is without explanation. The third, and most important, criticism concerns the aims and scope of the volume: the author does not set his findings in a wider context. Basically the book serves as a source book for anybody interested in tracing Swiss citizens who have emigrated from Switzerland to South Africa. However, no comparison is made with emigration from Switzerland during the same period to other parts of the world, e.g. South or North America. No section of the book attempts to answer the question as to what influence the Swiss—compared with other European nations—had in South Africa. Perhaps, therefore, it does not come as a surprise that the book does not contain any 'Conclusion' or even an 'Introduction'. It does not provide an outline or define its aims. In short, a more limited time period and more precise aims would have added tremendous value to this study. These limitations notwithstanding, this beautifully arranged volume is a must for anybody interested in Swiss–South African relations. It becomes both relevant and timely, considering the recent debates and controversies concerning Swiss involvement in supporting the apartheid regime.

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EBENEZER OBIRI ADDO, *Kwame Nkrumah: a case study of religion and politics in Ghana*. Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1997, 235 pp., US\$42.00, ISBN 0 7618 0785 3.

This book is a rather curious throwback to the 1960s when 'modernisation' and 'nation building' were widely construed as the twin challenges facing the governments of newly independent African states. Today the terms are generally avoided because of the assumptions about social progress and the primacy of political leadership that underpin them. Ebenezer Addo does not set out to justify his resort to an older problematic, but he does consciously locate his account in the writings of Max Weber, Clifford Geertz and David Apter. Apter is a very obvious influence, as the author sets to show how Nkrumah creatively manipulated 'traditional' values and symbols in order to forge the modern Ghanaian state.

The role of religious practice in

Ghanaian life, and the manner in which Nkrumah manipulated religious symbolism, are undoubtedly a subject worthy of closer study. Unfortunately the author devotes a great deal of the text to repeating basic details of Nkrumah's travels abroad and early political career which have been recounted many times before—not least in his own autobiography. The result is that he is left with relatively little space in which to get to grips with the really intriguing questions. The most interesting sections of the book deal with the conflict between Nkrumah and the mainstream Churches, and it is this theme which could most usefully have been developed. As things stand the reader receives little more than a taster.

More generally, while one may agree that Nkrumah was creative in his use of chiefly and other cultural symbols, it is difficult to take at face value the suggestion that he forged the nation. Since the 1960s a substantial literature has tended to focus rather more on the processes through which ordinary people have come to imagine themselves as belonging to entities such as nations and ethnic groups. The literature on former colonial societies has also tended to eschew the 'great leader' perspective and to distinguish between the agendas of political elites and the perspectives of people on the ground. Many of these insights would seem eminently relevant to Ghana but are not taken on board or acknowledged. Instead the reader is invited to buy into a long-standing stock of myths surrounding Nkrumah (even if the author has some critical observations to make). In sum, then, while there are some interesting nuggets in this book, it does not greatly advance debates about religion or the Nkrumah legacy.

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JEAN-LOUIS TRIAUD, *La Légende noire de la Sanûsiyya: une confrérie musulmane saharienne sous le regard français, 1840–1930*. Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme; Aix-en-Provence: Institut de recherches et d'études sur le monde arabe et musulmane, 1995, two volumes, 1,178 pp., ISBN 2 7351 0584 9.

The black legend surrounding the Sanûsiyya, the idea that this Muslim brotherhood was at the centre of anti-European conspiracies, was a harbour of fanaticism, is